

Photos Takeout

User Guide & FAQ

Version 2.6 (18 March 2024)

[Customer Support: Click here](#)

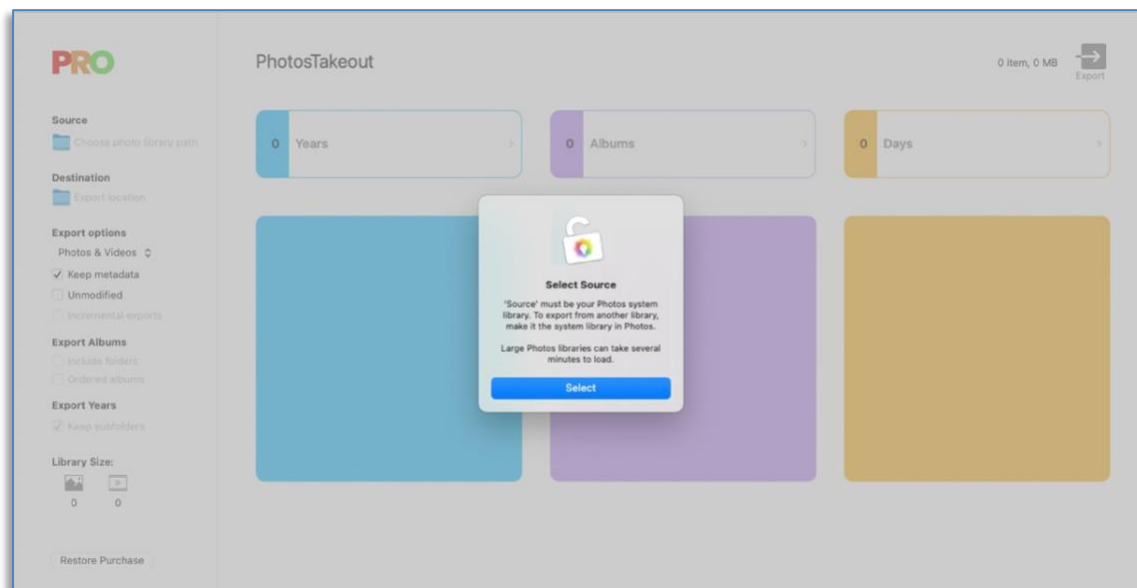
Photos Takeout exports photos and videos from the Mac Photos library in neat folders. It's easy to use: Just select years, albums or days and click Export.

Before starting your exporting, ensure that:

- ❖ Photos Takeout has permission to access your photos. Go to System Preferences > Security & Privacy > 'Privacy' > Photos. Photos Takeout **must be check marked**.
- ❖ The **Source** library you select is the current **System Photo Library**. Check via Photos Settings (Preferences in Monterey or older) and change if necessary.
- ❖ Your Mac has enough free space to save photos downloaded from iCloud. If you have photos in iCloud, Photos Takeout will first download and then export them.

Control Panel

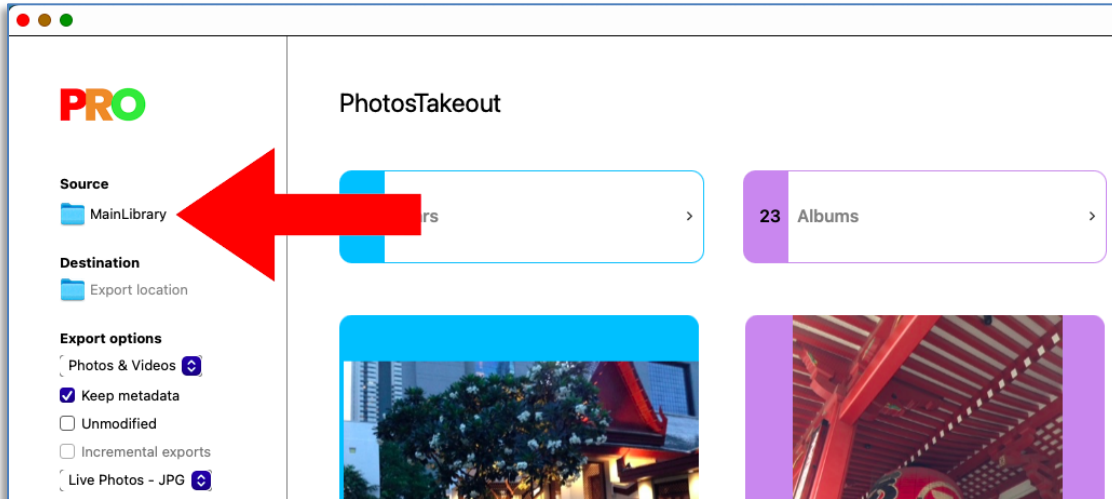
On launching Photos Takeout, you'll see this screen:



In the left pane, specify the **source** Photos library, the **export destination** and all other parameters. See the next section for more details. In the right pane, select which Years, Albums or Moments (Days) to export. Click **Export** to start exporting your selection.

Left pane

Source: Photos Takeout will export photos from this library. If you have more than one Photos library, ensure that you choose the current system library as the source.



If you set Source as a library other than the system library, none of the iCloud-based, edited and referenced items will get exported. To export from a library that's not the currently the system library, first set it as the system library in Photos > Settings (or Preferences).

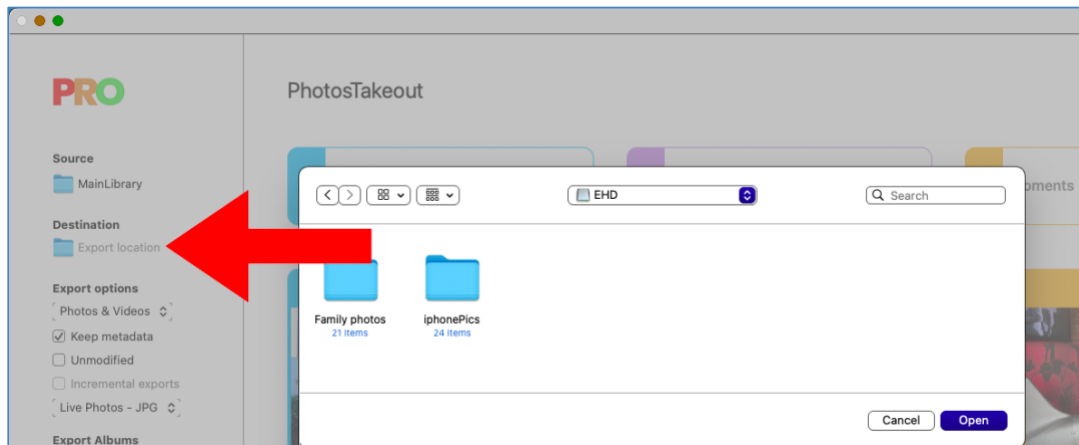


The Photos Library is usually located in the Pictures folder. If you have more than one library, find and select the one you want to export from, then click **Open**.



Depending on your library's size, it may take a few seconds to several minutes to load. A 100GB library may take 3-4 minutes to load; 1TB library around 45 minutes.

Destination: In the left pane, click below Destination and select where to save the exported folders, e.g. Mac's desktop, Dropbox, Google Drive, EHD etc. The destination location must have enough free space to accommodate the selected items.

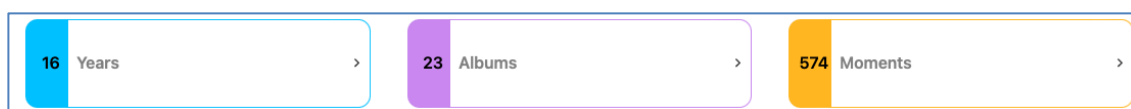


- ❖ On MacOS Catalina and later, the app remembers the Source and Destination from the last session. In older versions you must re-input the Source and Destination.

Export options: Use these filters to fine tune the selection of items to be exported.

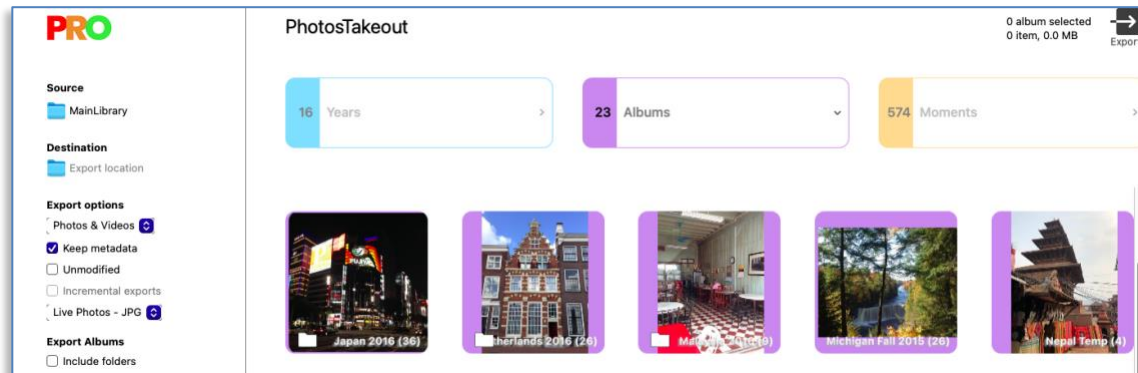
- **Keep metadata:** Check marking this will embed all EXIF/IPTC metadata as well as any titles, descriptions, keywords or locations that you have added in Photos. If you want to remove metadata for privacy or other reasons, uncheck this box.
- **Unmodified:** Leave this box unchecked to export the latest versions of photos and videos with all your edits. To export the unmodified originals, check it.
- **Keep Folders:** If the selected albums are in folders, check marking this box will export the albums along with the folder-subfolder hierarchy.
- **Keep ordered:** If the photos have been custom-arranged in an album, check mark this box to preserve the sequence. Items in the album will be renamed as album-name 000n.filetype (Feature available only in Catalina and later).
- **Keep subfolders:** When exporting Years, check this box to get monthly subfolders. They will be named 1 (for Jan), 2 (Feb) etc. For Moments, this option is greyed out. To export Albums with the folder hierarchy, use 'Keep Folders' explained above.
- **Media selector:** To choose between Photos & Videos, Photos Only, Videos only.
- **Live selector:** To choose between exporting only the JPG component or JPG + MOV.

Right pane



To export ALL years, ALL albums or ALL moments/dates from your library, click on the relevant top-level button, and click Export.

To select specific years, albums etc., click on the relevant button. This expands the view and shows the selected category's folders and the number of items in each folder.



To select multiple non-contiguous folders, ⌘-click them. For contiguous folders, click the first folder, then hold down Shift and click the last folder in the range.

After this, click **Export** button on top right. A progress indicator will show % complete. If any photos aren't found or fail to export, you'll get an alert. See FAQ for what to do.

Free Trial and Upgrading

- **Free version:** To check out how the app works. Exports only one photo per folder.
- **Power version:** For Photos libraries of up to 50GB in size. Unlimited exports.
- **Pro version:** For larger libraries (No limitation on library size).
- **Power Up:** If you already have the Power version, the Power Up in-app purchase lets you upgrade to Pro Power version by paying just the price difference. Do not buy the Pro version separately, because then the App Store won't know to apply a discount.

Contact Us for Support

Contact us via Help in the app's top menu bar. Include a detailed description of the issue. Also mention: Your macOS version, your Photos library's total size (GB) and items count, library location (Mac or EHD? If EHD, confirm that it is formatted as APFS or Extended Journaled, location of photos (locally in Mac Photos, iCloud, referenced, or a combination of these); and the export destination (Mac, EHD, NAS, cloud storage etc.)

FAQ and Troubleshooting

GENERAL

1. I have a multi-terabyte library. Will Photos Takeout be able to handle it?

Yes, the Pro version can handle libraries of any size. For small libraries (up to 50GB), you only need the Power version. Library size equals photos saved in the Mac Photos library plus those in iCloud and any referenced photos.

2. Are photos and videos exported in the original or reduced resolution?

Photos are exported in original resolution. Our app doesn't alter photo quality. For lossy formats e.g. JPG, the file size (MB) may differ a bit but resolution (MP) stays the same.

3. Is metadata preserved when exporting, for both photos and videos?

Yes. Check 'Keep metadata' box to retain the EXIF and IPTC metadata, as well as Title, Description, Location and Keywords that you've added in Photos app.

4. Does Photos Takeout support M1 Macs? What if I upgrade from old Mac to M1?

Yes, Photos Takeout works on both Intel and M1 Silicon-powered Macs. It will also work if you purchase it on your Intel Mac and later install it on an M1 Mac.

5. I have two Macs. Do I need to buy two licenses to use Photos Takeout on both?

No: You can use one license on up to 6 Macs. Log into the other Mac using the Apple ID with which you purchased the app, and the 'Get' button in the App Store will change to the Download (cloud with downward arrow), indicating that it's a free download.

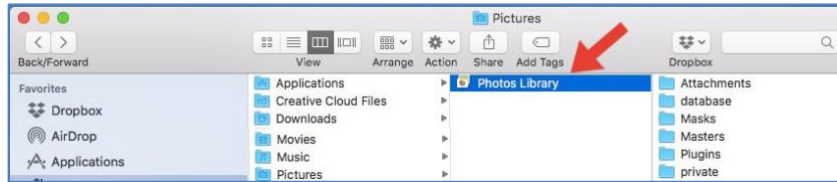
USING THE APP

1. Where is my Photos Library located? I can't seem to find it.

Its default location is in User/Pictures folder, and it has the same icon as the Photos app. If you don't see the library there, or can't find the Pictures folder, click Finder > Go > Home > Pictures, and drag it into the Favorites. If you have multiple Photos libraries, or have moved the library from Picture folder, then select it from the new location.

2. I launched the app but couldn't select the Photos library: On trying to select it, the 'Open' button was greyed out.

Select the library (Red arrow in the screenshot below), not the expanded folders within it. Single-click to select the Photos Library, don't double-click on it.



3. I have two Photos libraries, and macOS Catalina or later. I want to export from the one that's not the system library. How to?

For Catalina or later, Photos Takeout exports photos stored in iCloud, edited photos and referenced items *only* if the system library is set as the source. To change the system library, open Photos > Preferences/Settings > General > Set the desired library as the system library, as explained [here](#). Close Photos app, then launch Photos Takeout.

For Mojave and older, you must first download photos stored in iCloud to the Mac Photos library, then export with Photos Takeout. Source doesn't have to be the system library.

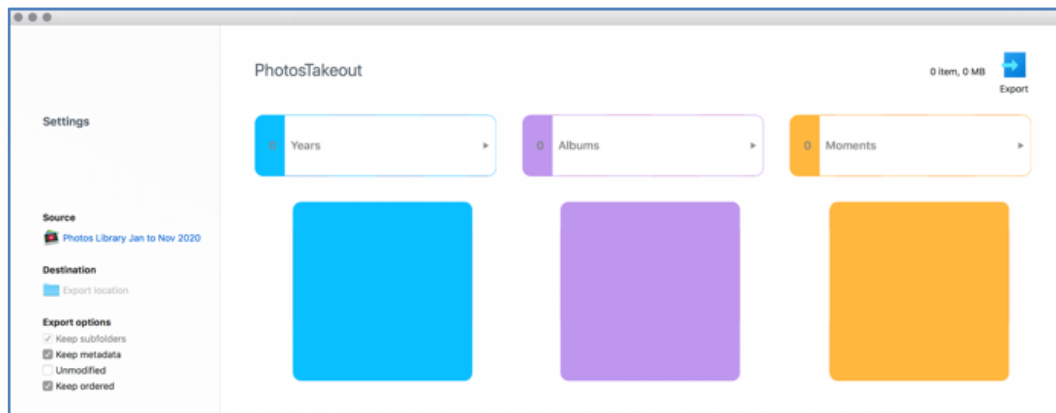
4. I get 'Error: Database is locked message' on launching the app.

If the Photos app is open, quit it. Then open Activity Monitor > Select Photos Agent and photolibraryd > Press (x) to quit the processes. This should resolve the error.

5. There are two user accounts on my Mac. Can Photos Takeout run from both?

Yes, provided that Photos Takeout is installed in the shared Applications folder.

6. App shows zero items in Years, Albums and Moments. Nothing happens when I click the Years, Albums or Moments buttons (Screenshot below):



Open Settings (System Preferences) > Security & Privacy > Privacy > Photos, and check mark Photos Takeout. Further, even if Source is already set, click it and reselect the system library. This grants Photos Takeout access to your library.

Another reason may be version mismatch, e.g. trying to use a Catalina library on a Big Sur Mac, or a Sonoma library on a Mojave Mac, or an iPhoto library on any Mac.

7. How to select multiple albums or years for export?

To select all items, Press Command-A or click Edit > Select All. To select multiple non-contiguous items, hold down the Command key and click each item. To select a range of contiguous items, click the first item, then hold down the Shift key and click the last item. Or drag with mouse to select the items within the selection rectangle.

8. Some items failed to export. Error message: “X files exported. Y not found.”



Several possible reasons; the main ones are listed [here](#). Try to eliminate these. If the problem persists, contact us with the details listed in **OTHER** section below.

9. How to download photos stored in iCloud to Photos app on my Mac?

You need to do this only in Mojave or older. In Catalina and later, Photos Takeout can automatically download and export photos from iCloud. To manually download photos from iCloud, go to Photos > Preferences > iCloud > select Download Originals to Mac. Once they are downloaded, use Photos Takeout to export.

10. I renamed some pictures in Photos app. If I right-click any photo and select Get Info, I can see both names. But after exporting, I only see one name. Why?

Apple Photos stores original file names as well as Titles. Photos Takeout keeps Titles if present, otherwise the original names. Also, if multiple photos have the same name, they'll be sequentially numbered e.g. Vacation 1.jpg, Vacation 2.jpg etc.

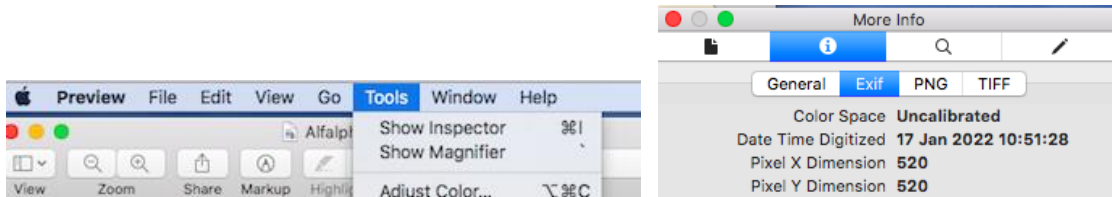
11. I exported photos to external HD but they're all zero kB and can't be opened. The error message says “File could not be opened because it is empty”

Check the EHD format (Right-click EHD icon on the desktop > Get Info). It should be APFS or Extended Journaled, not MSDOS (fat 32) or ex FAT.

To check whether EHD format or permissions are causing this problem, try exporting a single year or album to your **Mac desktop** and see if it exports correctly.

12. **In all my exported photos, Date Created changed to “Today”, even though I opted to keep metadata. I am checking in Mac Preview (Get Info).**

This happens only in macOS Mojave or older. Even in these old versions, we preserve all EXIF/IPTC metadata including Dates. Please check the EXIF date with Preview, not with Finder. Open the photo with Preview > click Tools > Show Inspector > EXIF.



13. **Why did formats of some HEIC files change to JPG upon exporting?**

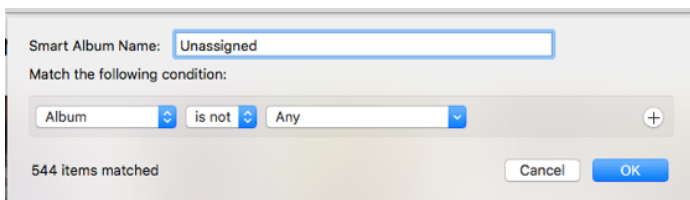
Photos Takeout exports *edited* HEIC items as JPG and *edited* MP4 files as MOV. This is consistent with how Photos does it. This doesn't happen for unmodified originals.

14. **How to export shared albums or smart albums?**

In 'Export Options' panel, check mark **shared albums** to display these under the Albums tab. You can select and export these just like other albums. The Photos app strips most metadata from shared albums. To export a **smart album**, save it as a regular album under My Albums, then you'll be able to export it just like other albums.

15. **I want a complete backup. If I export all albums, that won't be complete because photos not assigned to any album will be left out. What to do?**

In Photos app, click File > New Smart Album, and use the following settings to create a smart album of all unassigned photos. Then convert it to a regular album and export:



16. **I can export Year- and Date-wise folders, but how to export month-wise folders?**

Export Years and check mark the 'Keep subfolders' box in the Export Options panel.

17. **How to avoid files being renamed as albumname-NNN when I export an album?**

Uncheck the *Export Albums > Ordered Albums* box ('Ordered Albums' option is for users who've custom-arranged photos in albums, and want to retain this ordering upon export.)

18. How does Photos Takeout handle export of raw images?

Raw photos may have been imported into Photos as raw-only or raw-jpeg pairs. For both cases, Photos Takeout exports according to the following rule:

Unmodified check-marked: Only the unedited original RAW file will be exported.

Unmodified unchecked: Only the latest edited JPG version will be exported.

19. My current system library on Mac syncs with iCloud. I also have a library on EHD that's too big for Mac or iCloud. If I set this as my system library for using with Photos Takeout, won't it start uploading to iCloud?

No need to upload the photos to iCloud – or even to Mac. Use the following workflow:

- Temporarily disconnect the Mac from iCloud. [See how](#).
- Connect EHD to Mac. In Photos Preferences, make the EHD library the system library.
- Launch Photos Takeout and export whatever you want
- Reverse Step 2 (Disconnect EHD; revert to normal Photos and iCloud settings).

20. My full resolution photos are in iCloud, and *Optimize Mac Storage* is checked in Photos Preferences. If I export all photos, will everything be downloaded to Mac before export? What if there isn't enough free disk space on the Mac?

In Catalina and later, Photos Takeout fetches items from iCloud. In Mojave and older, you have to download them into the Photos library and then export. If your Mac doesn't have free space, move your Photos library to an EHD ([See how](#)), set this library as the system library (in Photos > Preferences), wait for it to sync with iCloud, then export. This will download items from iCloud to the library on EHD instead of Mac.

21. The progress indicator is stuck at X% and the app seems to be hanging.

Photos in iCloud are first downloaded to Mac Photos – so please check if your Mac has enough disk space to accommodate everything. Downloads from iCloud also take long if you have many files or a slow wi-fi. Very rarely, the progress indicator may run ahead and wait for exports to catch up. Please wait for the process to finish.

22. In my Photos Preferences, "Copy items to the Photos library" is unchecked, i.e. photos are stored as referenced files. These failed to export.

In Big Sur and later, you need to give Photos Takeout full disk access. Quit Photos Takeout. Open System Preferences > Security & Privacy > Privacy > in Left pane, select Full Disk Access > In Right pane, click (+) and add Photos Takeout to the list and check mark it > Reboot the Mac. Now the referenced files will be exported.

23. Why is face recognition information not exported as part of metadata?

Face recognition information is not part of EXIF or IPTC metadata, but you can add the names of people in photos in the IPTC keywords field. To do this, go to **People** view in Photos > click on a face > the photos containing that face will be displayed > Select all > right click, Get Info > add the person's name in keywords.

24. How to export incrementally, i.e. only the photos added since the last export?

This feature is currently under development.

25. If I re-export albums or years, will I get duplicate files and folders or updated assets including those added since last export?

Re-exporting to the same location (path) will add duplicate files in the previously exported folders; e.g. file XYZ.jpeg will be duplicated as XYZ0.jpeg. If you edited this file since the last export, XYZ0.jpeg will reflect the edits. If you export to a different path, all the folders will be created afresh and the latest set of photos saved in them.

26. My Live Photos were exported as JPG/HEIF. What about the video?

Click on the Live Photos selector in the Export Options panel, and select the dropdown option JPG + MOV. The videos will be saved in a separate folder.

OTHER

1. How to export only selected photos or videos (not folders)?

Do it from Photos app, not Photos Takeout. Select the items and either drag and drop in your desired location or (for more options) click File > Export.

2. Does Photos Takeout work with iPhoto or Aperture libraries?

No, Photos Takeout is only meant for Photos app. Not iPhoto or Aperture.

3. Can I open a Photos library fetched from a Mac running Mojave with Photos Takeout on a Mac running a newer version of macOS?

No, you can only use a Photos Library that can be opened with Photos on that Mac. To use a Mojave library on a Monterey Mac, first import it into Photos for Monterey. Note that you can't downgrade a newer version of Photos library to an older version.

4. My question isn't answered here. How to get **Customer Support**?

In the app, click Help > Contact Us. Mention your macOS version, items count in your library, size of library (GB), its location (Mac or EHD? Confirm its formatting is APFS or Extended Journaled), location of photos (locally in Mac Photos, iCloud or referenced); and the export destination (Mac, EHD, NAS, cloud storage etc.), and description of the issue. The more details you provide, the faster we'll be able to troubleshoot.

KNOWN ISSUES

1. Some features may not work in macOS Mojave and older. The app will work for old OS's, but with limitations. For example, photos and videos saved in iCloud must be downloaded to the local library before export, and keywords are not exported.
2. Metadata added to videos via the Photos app is not retained upon export (Note that this also happens on exporting with Photos app – Date & Time original are retained only when you exported unedited originals, not in edited videos).
3. When exporting the folder-subfolder-albums hierarchy (with 'Keep folders' check marked), the albums and folders must have distinct names. If an album has the same name as its parent folder, photos will be saved in the parent folder.
4. On clicking the 'Cancel export' button, the progress indicator stops but exports don't. We will resolve this bug soon, but in the meantime, please quit the app to abort.

Follow us on [Facebook](#) for the latest on Photos Takeout features, tips & tricks etc.

Try our other apps:



[Pic Scanner Gold](#)
(iOS)

Created in 2013, Pic Scanner was the world's first mobile app for scanning and auto-cropping multiple photos at a time. It offers unlimited scanning and great features for a one-time price. No subscription or in-app purchases. One million users!



[SnipTag](#)
(macOS)

Two powerful tools for photo scanning projects:
1) **Snip**: Scan multiple photos per scan with a scanner or digital camera. Batch-crop them *all* with just one click.
2) **Tag**: Add captions (dates, descriptions, locations) and metadata to photos in batch mode.



[Joggle](#)
(iOS and Android)

A completely original, mildly cerebral word game inspired by crossword puzzles. Thousands of one-minute puzzles to entertain and exercise your brain. Free. Try it now!